

Temporary Migration of Transylvanian Roma to Hungary

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Abstract:

The study is focused on the impact that migration has on the communities of origin. The population under study is representative of two categories of Roma who work in the informal economy in Hungary. Some of them are temporarily employed in low skilled jobs, while the others are small traders. The degree of deprivation, the lack of resources (agricultural land, formal jobs) as well as a good knowledge of the Hungarian language has led the Roma communities from Transylvania - especially from Harghita County – to undertake temporary migration to Hungary. Their economic and social life has begun to change depending on the practices associated with migration, without replacing their means of survival at local level. On the other hand, migration policies imposed by the state are considered to be structural changes, which affect the cross border economy and the principles of social organization of Roma communities.

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The socioeconomic situation of Roma in socialism and post-socialism

During socialist period, the Roma from Eastern Europe were the target of assimilation policies. As a consequence, many of them were employed in the socialist economic system. They were industrial workers, low skilled or unskilled workers, and cooperative members in the former collective farms. Others had succeeded in remaining outside the socialist production units, working in the second economy. The main informal activity available to Roma was petty trade, which they carried on throughout the country. During the socialist period, the poor access to jobs that were socially and economically valued, together with the doubtful morality of commerce (trade) has created a niche for some categories of Roma (Thuen, 1999; Kontantinov, 1994). Trade has proved to be a lucrative economic activity both during socialism and in post-socialism.

The systematic changes brought by post-socialism have led to massive unemployment, thus the Roma have become more vulnerable in the new socioeconomic environment. The less qualified were the first to be fired. For example, in the first year following the collapse of Romanian socialism around 80% of Roma had no jobs (Folkeryd & Svanberg, 1995). Those who had worked in the state agricultural cooperatives encountered the same difficulties of adaptation. They were deprived in different ways of the land which was rightfully theirs following their participation in collective labour (Stewart, 2002).

The lack of resources and social exclusion has led to a massive impoverishment among Roma. Despite this general situation, the Roma who have successfully worked in the secondary socialist economy were able to reproduce their resources during post-socialism too. Different Roma groups have responded differently to similar conditions. The Roma have continued to practice petty trading after 1990, but many of them have preferred cross border trade. Those who were unemployed started some informal activities such as temporary migration in order to find jobs. These migrants stay for limited period of time in the country of destination, some weeks or months, after which they come back with some money.

The socialist experience of each occupational group of Roma is well reflected in their current activities. Each informal activity adopted implies the mobilization of some resources and a certain risk assessment, as well as different outcomes. Previous research emphasize that, even the ambulatory trade carries risks, at the same time there are greater rewards than in seasonal work. These discrepancies seem to have different implications for their way of life (Voiculescu, 2002).

In this study, I will discuss two categories of Roma empirically identified in Transylvania:

- a) those who were employed as workers in the socialist planned economy;
- b) those who worked exclusively in the secondary economy.

In many rural multiethnic places in Transylvania, we encounter, besides the dominant ethnic groups of Romanians and Hungarians, one or more groups of Roma. They can easily be differentiated by occupational criteria. The Roma who started their occupational career in socialist industry or state cooperative farms are those who are often called by locals "home" Gypsies. The others, those who worked in the secondary economy before 1990, have initiated small-scale trade in Hungary. After 1990, "home" Gypsies also began to engage in informal activities across the border, especially seasonal work.

Purpose and questions

The purpose of this analysis is to evaluate the impact of structural changes (migration policies) on the economic activities of Roma and to study the way in which the relationship between the economic activities and the principles of social organization is affected. These transformations can be best observed by comparing the two groups.

After 1990, in Eastern Europe the right of free movement of people and goods over the geopolitical borders has been introduced. The opening of the frontier between Romania and Hungary has new opportunities for ethnic Hungarians and other inhabitants of Transylvania familiar with the Hungarian language. However, some restrictions continued to exist. Until 2002, Romanian citizens travelling to West-European countries were required to have visas and residence permits. Since Romanian accession to the Schengen Treaty, on 1 January 2002, visas are no longer necessary for the access to European countries. This transformation has been accompanied by the introduction of some new regulations, according to which travellers are required to have money "in convertible currency", the amount depending on the length of stay in the destination country.

For neighbouring countries (for example Hungary) the same measures were applied though the amount of money was smaller, which was a constraint on circulation compared to the previous period. Starting from 1 May 2004, with the entry of Hungary into the European Union, it is expected that restrictions will intensify. These structural changes, which are progressively restricting circulation, have had and will have a considerable impact on cross-border economic activity, whether commercial or labour related. The border, which offered opportunities, has become an obstacle (Wilson & Donnan, 1998) for those who gain their living by temporary migration to Hungary.

Together with the new configuration of the European Union borders, we can expect an increasing degree of complexity of social organization and informalization (Castells & Portes, 1993: 30) within the migrant groups. At the same time, we can expect that migrants, including Roma, will adapt their informal strategies to the new context in order to be able to carry on their economic pursuits successfully.

The events, which form the context for the economic strategies of the two groups of Roma, can be structured, analytically speaking, into four periods:

- 1945-1990, when the socialist regime pursued various assimilationist policies for Roma, and the borders with neighbouring countries were officially closed;
- 1990-2001, when restrictions and visas were imposed on Romanian citizens only for travel to Western countries, the Roma were defined as one of the poorest social categories and at the same time a distinctive ethnic group;
- after 1 January 2002, when Romania's accession to the Schengen Treaty removed the requirement for tourist visas, but at the same time imposed some financial restrictions, for both Western Europe and neighbouring countries;
- after 23 October 2003, the permitted periods of residence in Hungary were reduced to 90 days in a 6 months period. From 1 May 2004 the Romanian border with Hungary will become a new border of the EU and we will probably witness some new security measures which will be introduced to stop migration flows from the East.

The four periods correspond to four regimes of social and territorial mobility in which the importance of national and supranational structures have been crucial in determining migration practices.

This paper is concerned with the occupational variation which has occurred in the economic life of Roma during the four periods. It aims to show the degree to which occupational changes over the four periods are reflected in their social organization.

I will consider locally circumscribed economic activities as well as those associated with migration and the relationship between these two clusters. Another aspect of the analysis is distinguishing the participants in local economic activities from those associated with the migration. These can be households, kinship or friendship networks. I will consider both groups of Roma, as well as their relations with their Hungarian neighbours. What types of relationships are established between them (complementarities, patronage, or dependence)? What purposes do these relations serve? They can be economic (solving the problem of obtaining credit, a financial loan) or non-economic (formation, maintenance or expansion of networks)? What 'investments' are implied by the development of the economic activities and how they spend the "profit" obtained? Which household and family roles become salient during migration? How are social relations modified by the impact of temporary migration? What is the nature of gender relations among the Roma and what is the role of gender division in economic activities? In which contexts are different types of networks used (constituted on ethnic criteria, kinship relations or other socio-cultural bases)?

The setting²

The study was undertaken in the village of Atid, in Harghita County – a multiethnic community consisting of Hungarians and Roma, of around 1135 inhabitants³. Given the fact that at the last census, the Roma have declared themselves as Hungarians, we do not have accurate data of their number. But if we consider the estimates of the local police and the opinions of other inhabitants, Atid would contain between 600 and 800 Roma. At the level of the commune (the larger administrative unit), their number might rise to around 1300 out of a total of 2871 inhabitants, which means they are about half of the population. The Roma from Atid are divided into two groups: "home" Gypsies (*hazi cigany*) and "Gabor" Gypsies (*satoros cigany*). "Home" Gypsies do not own agricultural land, their houses are deteriorating quickly and they do not have sufficient sources of income to financially sustain their large families. Generally, "Gabor" Roma are richer and the differences are noticeable in the general appearance of the houses, much bigger and well maintained, within as well as without, compared to the houses of "home" Gypsies.

The largest part of population, Hungarians, owns extended agricultural lands, and each household owns farm animals (especially cattle). The breeding of animals was one of the main occupations dating back to collectivization period, in the 1960s. "Home" Gypsies worked in the old CAP too, as animal herders and shepherds. "Gabor" Roma speak Romany (with their family and in their own community), Hungarian (with the Hungarian inhabitants and with "home" Gypsies) and Romanian (in employment or trading situations, in which most people are Romanian speakers).

2 The fieldwork which I base my article on was carried out in April 2004 in the village of Atid, the county of Harghita, Romania.

3 The data resulted from the population census produced in 2002, at village level. At previous censuses, in 1992 and 1997, the village population was 1250, and 1224, respectively.

Economic practices at local and regional level

Tinker Roma – “Gabor” - and their contact with the city before 1990

Although “Gabor” Gypsies do not have strategies oriented towards the local level, they have been and are forced by external circumstances to involve themselves in the economic life of the village.

In the 1960s, collectivization and the high level of competition between the large number of tinker Roma in Harghita county, forced “Gabori” to look for jobs in other areas of the country, especially in the Banat region (a Western part of Romania). Although many of them have special permits as small craftsmen, the flexibility and the profit obtained from the tinker’s trade situated them in the second economy as an alternative to the planned socialist economy. The migration of tinker Roma could be seen within the general context of population mobility from rural to urban areas after the Second World War, a phenomenon specific to all socialist countries. A facilitating factor was their positive attitude towards migration. “Gabor” families pursued an active search for economic opportunities and ensured informational support for new migrants.

As for the kinship relations, these begin to extend beyond the village of origin and surroundings from the moment of departure. Many of the children of those who have left marry other “Gabor” Roma encountered at the place of destination. Some of these newly formed couples have established themselves in towns in the Banat region. A general rule in the social life of these Roma is the prohibition of marriage with other Roma lineages (“*neam*”) or groups, the search of a partner being undertaken by the parents. They will try to form alliances with the most prosperous “Gabor” families. Even if they occur far away from the native town, the marriages respect the principle of endogamy. These relations of consanguinity make their contribution to the construction of powerful feelings of belonging to the same community (Williams, 1982) or lineage. In this respect, “Gabor” Gypsies feel that they have to differentiate themselves from “home” Gypsies by manipulating blood relationships. The exclusion of other groups of Gypsies is extended to all social and economic levels of life.

Gender relations in economic activities represent an important aspect of their social organization. Only men practice the tinker’s trade, while women take care of the household and of children. This is the most salient norm of the organization of domestic group, women’s work outside domestic space is considered a subject of public shame. However, before 1990, “Gabor” wives practiced small-scale trading but, commerce did not have the same prestige and productivity levels as the tinker’s trade.

One of the changes which took place at this level of organization occurred when young couples started to temporarily migrate to Hungary for commerce, and both partners started to practice the same activity in order to gain more money. This aspect will be discussed in more detail in the section on migration to Hungary. At local level, during this period (after 1990), “Gabor” Roma continued to have the same occupations: men were tinkers, while women engaged in small-scale retailing. Women sell second-hand clothes bought from Hungary or Târgu Mureş in villages, earning up to 300000 ROL (approximately 7.50 EUR) per day. The money earned by men represents a significant income and it is spent in winter when it is very difficult for these Roma to find employment or to sell in the markets in Hungary. The money obtained by women from selling second-hand clothes is used for daily expenses.

“Home” Gypsies as day laborers in Atid

“Home” Gypsies undertake a great variety of occupations at local level. Before 1990, they were

employed on state cooperative farms and got an allocation of the land granted to cooperative members (*"lot in folosință"*). Consequently, they did not need to look for other sources of income. Although the net income obtained from the collective farm was not always sufficient, "home" Gypsies, like other employees of the cooperative, succeeded in stealing from their job and bringing home milk and other animal products in order to feed their families. At the same time, they had less interaction with the Hungarian population than in the post-socialist period.

After 1990, even if they had received an area equal to their old plot, to which they were entitled according to Law 18/1991, after a few years the Gypsies were dispossessing of land by decisions of the local council. In these conditions, "home" Gypsies tried new means of survival. Their occupations diversified while their relationships with the Hungarians intensified. According to the season, they have different activities. In spring and winter they are day labourers in agriculture or construction, in Romania or in Hungary, and in autumn and winter they manufacture brooms and baskets of wickerwork, which they sell. Besides, they perform different services for the community such as wood transportation from the forest to people's houses, especially for Hungarians. "Home" Gypsies have a steady income from social benefits, such as school allowances and social assistance. Besides these, they have some independent occupations such as horse trading at the local markets and other work for Hungarian households and also for "Gabor" Gypsies.

Day labour is the occupation that brings the greatest economic and non-economic benefits (money, produce, loans of both money and produce, for long periods of time). Many "home" Gypsies work in Hungarian households. Usually they are hired to do the household chores (milking and taking care of cows, digging the garden, cleaning the yard etc.) and less frequently they do agricultural labour such as digging or harvesting. The Hungarian household works with two or three families of Gypsies at most, maintaining constant relationships with them. In some households children are preferred, because their parents are not trustworthy, and are accused of alcoholism and ineffectiveness. Day labor is not confined to certain gender or age categories; all members of a Roma family are equally involved in this activity, sometimes in different families of Hungarians or "Gabor" Roma.

In exchange for work, "home" Gypsies can receive produce (flour, grain, potatoes, and beans) or money. Those who work for a long period of time for the same Hungarian family may obtain loans in exchange for future work. The loans can vary between 20 and 50000 ROL. "Home" Gypsies are usually loaned money for short periods of time, but also produce, for longer periods of time. In general both types of loans are repaid by days of labour. For the latter case, they ask Hungarians for potatoes, beans and other products, in return for an undertaking to work in spring in their households. These exchanges do not involve strict conditions of sanction for not performing work on the appointed day, because this can itself be negotiated and flexible.

Raymond Firth (1964), analyzing credit relations in peasant societies, proposes some ways of interpretation. He makes the distinction between a credit relationship of a contractual type, and one based on social control, between credit for consumption and credit for investments, between social credit and economic credit, between short term and long term credit. In our case, for local day labourers the credit is for consumption because the amounts loaned are used to ensure daily survival of the Roma household. It is based on social control due to the dependence-oriented relationship that has been created between "home" Gypsies and Hungarians. Working for Hungarians is vital because it represents one of the important sources of relatively stable income for Gypsies and at the same time it

ensures flows of goods and money when needed, in the form of credit. Credit relations imply social relations if we take account of the theoretical fact that, for cases of a socially oriented loan, the relational aspect is emphasized, while economic credit is simply expressed by the value of the exchanged goods. "Home" Gypsies repay the credit for consumption with work. This type of relation implies the trust of the person who give the credit and the capacity of the borrower to pay the money back (Firth, 1964: 29). That is why it is necessary to have a relationship based on reciprocal knowledge and trust.

Unlike Hungarians, "Gabor" Gypsies do not offer loans to "home" Gypsies who work for them. Their relationships are predominantly based on economic transactions and are more formal, compared to the relation that "home" Gypsies develop with Hungarians. The poorest "home" Gypsies' families sometimes work in "Gabor" households. The jobs they perform are mostly connected to house keeping, taking into account the fact that the rich Roma, unlike Hungarians, do not have land or farm animals. Hence the labour force used by "Gabor" Gypsies in their households consists mostly of women. Throughout the village one might often see "home" Gypsy women doing laundry or sweeping the yards of the rich Roma.

Another form of credit for consumption is buying food from village shops on credit up to the limit of the social transfers they receive⁴. In other words, "home" Gypsies are permitted "to open an account" at one of the shops or at bars. The loans are advantageous for the lender as well as for the borrower. If they don't have customers, the shopkeepers are obliged to sell on credit. In this way they ensure the functioning of their shops, even if without they make no profit. This type of credit is mostly economic given the high level of formalization of the credit network (fixed deadline to pay the debt, sanctions for non-payment, weak personalization of relationship). The informal agreement between the parties is to pay for the goods on the day they receive their social assistance or school allowances, the term for payment being fixed, monthly, in contrast with the undetermined credit obtained from the Hungarian households in which "home" Gypsies work by day. By different means of control the shopkeepers can succeed in obtaining warranties of payment from Gypsies. One of the warranties is the seizure of their identity cards (together with informing* the police and the local council), and the threat to stop their social assistance. These are illegal practices but they are possible as long as the "home" Gypsies are badly informed about their civil rights and obligations. The value of food bought on credit from the shop can be as much as 2500000 lei per month, for certain trustworthy Gypsy families. Trust involves not only the financial situation of the person who requests the credit, but the financial situation (granted by the totality of the social giros) of the entire household to which he or she belongs.

In this section I have described and analyzed the subsistence of "home" Gypsies through the connections between day labour, social transfers from state and credit relations they develop. The two types of credit relations are closely related to the meaning of the two principles of exchange defined by Marshall Sahlins (1965) as "generalized reciprocity" and "balanced reciprocity". "Generalized reciprocity" refers to transactions supposed to be altruistic, which imply, on one hand, the given help and, if it is possible, the needed one, the returned help (Sahlins, 1965, cited in Whitten & Whitten, 1972). "Balanced reciprocity" refers to a relation of direct exchange, in which goods are exchanged in equal quantities within a well-determined period of time. The meaning we are interested in here is the trans-

⁴ Informal credit represents a widespread and very accessible survival strategy in rural areas of Romania (Chelcea, 2002).

action within which the goods, which are not necessarily of the same type, are repaid within a period already agreed (*ibid.*).

In the first case (credit relations that “home” Gypsies establish as day labourers in Hungarian households), we encounter a more personalized relationship which involves trust⁵ and interaction between partners. The economic benefits to the parties are founded on social relationships. Day labour in Hungarian households could be interpreted here as mutual help and even as humanitarian action. Hungarians help Gypsies with loans and make them without special conditions, sometimes being tolerant in cases of non-payment of the debts. On the other hand, the work that the Gypsies do constitutes a real help for many Hungarian households within which the average age is quite high, not to mention the fact that this work force is very cheap. The loans given are not secured, thus the relationship between partners is based exclusively on trust.

In the second case (credit relations that “home” Gypsies establish as customers of some shops), the relationship is based on another type of trust, namely “assurance”, which is usually the background of contractual transactions. The economic aspect of the relationship is dominant, and it can be the essence of the social connection between partners⁶. In this case “home” Gypsies secure the loans with social giros (social assistance and allowances, to which the most numerous Gypsy families from the village are eligible), the payment deadline being the date on which they receive the money from the local council or by mail. The credit relationship is controlled by the invocation of a sanction – the confiscation of identity cards. All these, as well as the involvement of different institutions (city hall, mail, and police) indicate a greater level of standardization.

To sum up, day labour for Hungarians is a source of complex relations for “home” Gypsies, while the relationships with tinker Roma (“Gabor”) are sporadic and economically dominated.

Other economic activities of “home” Gypsies at the local level: the manufacture of baskets and brooms, horse trading, wood transportation

Even though the main activity of “home” Gypsies is day labour, they supplement their incomes by manufacturing baskets and brooms, transporting wood by wagon and horse trading. The manufacture of baskets and brooms is a seasonal activity, especially in winter. In autumn Gypsies gather branches and broom from the forests, which they weave and tie at home during winter, then they sell them. The handicraft products are sold in the village or in surroundings in times of intense competition. The price for a broom varies between 10 and 15000 ROL, and for a basket is around 50000 ROL. Many times they accept, in exchange, chicken products or living animals. This is the way in which they determine the value of the brooms or the baskets and some exchange rates:

A big basket = a chicken or

A broom = a kilo of bean or

A broom = ? kilo of bacon or

A broom = a bucket of potatoes.

There are no special preferences for monetary income or produce. The comment of a “home”

5 The concepts “trust” and “assurance”, expressed by Yamagishi & Yamagishi and developed by Molm, Takahashi and Peterson (2000), are discussed by Vintilă Mihăilescu in order to characterize the variation in sociality (Mihăilescu, 2002: 136).

6 „It is a feature of the main run of generalized reciprocities that the material flow is sustained by prevailing social relations; whereas, for the main run of balanced exchange, social relations hinge on the material flow” (Sahlins, 1965: 194-195).

Gypsy is relevant for this case: "with money we buy food, so it's the same". The brooms are sold or exchanged (around 3-400 items per winter), usually to the Hungarian households who breed farm animals, and are used to clean the stables. Handicraft activities and retailing or barter come in touch with the specific needs of the Hungarian households from the community.

Horses represent one of the forms of capital for "home" Gypsies, being used in two types of activities: wood transportation and selling or exchange at the market. On one hand, those who own a horse and a wagon perform wood transports during wintertime at Hungarians' request. People prefer to resort to Gypsies rather than to authorized woodchoppers, because they assume that the costs are lower. Let us take an example of an old Hungarian villager. Though he owns a large part of forest, he obtains wood from "home" Gypsies because he thinks they are cheaper. The wood from his forest is sold to a local entrepreneur. To undertake wood transport the Gypsies need a ticket from the forester that costs around 78000 ROL per day. In one day they can do up to three transports, a wagon of wood being sold for 200000 ROL. To warm up two rooms during winter, it is necessary to have at least three wagons of wood. Besides money, the Gypsies can accept in addition hay for their horses during winter. The payment is supplemented in this way because the Hungarians own large hay fields, and usually they have an excess, while the Gypsies, even if they are horse dealers, do not have hay.

These exchanges are evidence of relationships based on mutual help. The demand for the transactions with "home" Gypsies in this field is due also to their good value (they are much cheaper than others). The Gypsies succeed, through wood distribution, in keeping alive the horses with the hay they receive from clients. In this way they manage to involve themselves in another occupation – horse trading. The horses are traded in the following way: they exchange a good horse for a less productive one plus a difference of money (for example 700000 lei). The frequency of exchanges and the numbers of the exchanged horses are impressive. A "home" Gypsy had exchanged around 400 horses from 1982 up to the present. The last exchange had taken place a day before I discussed it with him. To minimize the risk of not selling the horses or of not having sufficient hay for the winter to feed them, the Gypsies, before and after an exchange, keep only one horse. The horses are exchanged in the five annual fairs in Atid, in neighbour markets and by different settlements with Hungarian horse owners. Although the circulation of horses is very frequent, it does not always bring profit. As the anthropologist Michael Stewart observed (1997: 142-164) in the case of Hungarian Gypsies, the success of this kind of operations is governed by luck.

In conclusion to this section, it is evident that the first two activities represent alternative survival solutions to day labour during winter. These activities comprise a portfolio of sources of informal incomes that reflect the lack of financial stability of the families (Stănculescu, 2002). The incomes obtained are usually used for household consumption. Economic practices of "home" Gypsies are very diverse and some of them have seasonal character. Thus, we encounter handicraft production, different types of exchange (barter, commercialization or mixed forms such as horse exchange), and different jobs. These practices underline the presence of a local mixed economy, monetary and non-monetary, oriented to immediate consumption. They are based on stable social relationships between "home" Gypsies and the Hungarian households in Atid.

Social organization of migration to Hungary

The migration of Roma from Atid is of temporary nature and the trips across the border are short-term, but the total time spent away during the year is quite long (Okolski, 2000: 107). Temporary migration to Hungary is an alternative to local economic activities, such as day labour, but the latter are not simply an alternative income source, they also provide the basis on which strategies for departure can be built. I will analyze migration in terms of strategy because it involves, in contrast to the economic practices at local or regional level, more elaborated action plans.

Even if the migration to Hungary is a generalized strategy in Atid, I consider that this phenomenon has, for the Roma groups, specific forms. For most anthropologists, the concept of strategy means the articulation of individual or group maneuvers within structural opportunities and constraints, in elaborated action plans (Whitten & Whitten, 1972: 248). The term has adaptive connotations when the action plan is a response to structural constraints.

In the following section I shall draw attention to three levels of any migration strategy: preparation for departure, the trip itself and the socioeconomic activities at the destination, and migration effects when they come back in Atid. I shall emphasize the social and economic resources involved, and the social organization formulas, which are used in migration strategies.

The strategies in the context of departure and during the trip

After 1990, "Gabor" Roma, especially the youngest, started to practice small-scale commerce in Hungarian marketplaces. During the socialist period, commerce, which was the economic activity performed exclusively by women, became a family occupation. The men simultaneously practiced tinker's trade in Romania - a craft passed from generation to generation - and commerce in Hungary, together with women. Commerce, like the tinker's trade, is an informal activity that involves increasing territorial mobility and an active search for potential clients. Taking into consideration these similarities we can say that the new occupation was adopted fairly easily, becoming in a couple of years characteristic of most of the "Gabor" families. In fact, their mobility within Romania before 1990 have made them more responsive to this new type of migration and to the exploitation of the new economic opportunities, in general. Beside those already mentioned, there are certain special characteristics of the new occupation. Migration to Hungary is selective, and consists mostly of young couples or young groups (usually brothers or cousins). Retailing is "a clean craft" say the youngest "Gabor" Gypsies, adding that, after 1990, "the youngest started with business, they grew wise, while the elders continued with the old craft".

Considering the access of "Gabor" Roma to plentiful material resources, compared to those of "home" Gypsies, the preparations for departure to Hungary do not involve special efforts. By access to plentiful material resources we understand the possibility to obtain loans from relatives easily, if needed. For example, if a "Gabor" intends to make a trip over the border, for commerce, he can easily get credit of up to 1000 EUR from his family or close relatives. The proximity of relatives and the existence of a "Gabori" community such as that in Atid, expand the interaction and the sharing of mutual information. Thus the risks of an economic activity are minimized. However, the loans are possible not because "Gabor" kinship is of an instrumental nature, but mostly because it represents a special purpose. Kinship does not involve the existence of an advantage; but mostly the maintenance of a social relationship of equality (Harris, 1998: 80-81). This is the case when the person or the persons

who intend to go do not have sufficient money to start trading activity (money for the accommodation, obtaining supplies, travel expenses etc). But the money needed for departure is mostly allocated from the profit from other periodical (seasonal) trips for commerce.

For "home" Gypsies, the first migration to Hungary coincided, as I said, with the dissolution of the state collective farms. The first migrants were those who got enough money working as day labourers in Atid. What forced them to leave the first time, were the differences between the payment for day labour and earnings from trade. Even though the migrants' networks and the number of those who leave periodically have increased, these migrants still encounter numerous obstacles when they try to go to Hungary.

In contrast with "Gabor", "home" Gypsies have to make great efforts to leave. Because they do not have, in most of the cases, the resources needed to migrate they have to adopt different strategies. In order to go to Hungary, they need a certain amount of money to cover several expenses. One of the first problems is the passport and travelling expenses to Hungary (around 1000000 ROL). Most of them do not have a passport, or it has expired. The cost of a passport is around 2500000 -3000000 ROL including two roundtrips to the chief town of the county, Miercurea Ciuc. For "Gabor" Roma, obtaining these amounts does not represent any problem. For "home" Gypsies it is a major obstacle. They have to save up money from day labor or to borrow it from the Hungarians (sometimes in usury). Thus, the only source they can draw on to invest in migration is their social capital, especially their relationships with Hungarians, but not with other Gypsies. Only those who have worked for a long time in one Hungarian household and have gained the trust of their "host" can obtain loans without interest. The loans with interest represent a particular case, which does not presume a stable relationship with the lender. "Home" Gypsies prefer loans without interest, and try to establish and maintain good connections with Hungarian households which need workers. In this respect, day labour has more than an economic function and is an important element in social organization.

The money for departure covers only the minimum expenses. Many times, on arrival, migrants do not even have money for housing and food for the first week. The employers are the only persons who can offer support during this period. Thus, the Gypsies are motivated to develop a special relationship with the employer at their destination, relationships which will be considered in detail in the next section.

Also, "home" Gypsies have no money to show to customs at the border or to leave at home. But even these obstacles can be overtaken. As for crossing the border, the Gypsies choose to travel with different transportation companies specializing in trips to Hungary, which ensure the necessary amounts of money for each person at the customs. This is one of the survival strategies for many companies which ensure person transportation to Hungary. Starting on 1 May 2004 the conditions that must be complied with at the customs have intensified, apparently constituting a new obstacle for the migrants. But the transportation branches specified are an important resource and an informal institution that facilitates migration, irrespective of the evolution of protection measures.

As for the division of gender roles during migration, men are those who leave more often, that is why they are the first who have a passport. Women stay at home to take care of children and to maintain the household while the husband is absent. Women leave together with men only when they can leave children in the care of elder brothers who are capable of working to support the household.

In contrast to "Gabor" migrants, "home" Gypsies do not have work permits and are not hired legal-

ly in Hungary. For this reason they have difficulties at the customs, especially on their return. The officers, knowing that the Gypsies are returning to Romania with "black money", take some of their goods, cigarettes, coffee, and sometimes money, in exchange for permission to re-enter Romania without problems. At departure, when migrants leave Hungary, even by train there are some problems. "Home" Gypsies as any other seasonal workers declare themselves tourists at passport control. Sometimes officers let them pass, but generally since 1995-1996 immigration control has intensified (according to some subjective estimates) and the risk having a refusal of entry stamp on the passport is higher. The main reason for migrating and working illegally in Hungary is the high cost of annual working permits (approximately 80000 HUF) and of visas. This is the starting point for adaptive strategies (the use of informal institutions and of the networks of middlemen which facilitate migration), but this is only possible with the involvement of the employers at the destination.

There are risks involved in informal work to both the employer and the employee. To reduce the risks, the employers and their employees, the Gypsies, resort to middlemen networks which recommend them to one another. Former employees, people who know everybody, form these networks. Reciprocal recommendations reduce the risks. The employers do not want to risk hiring unknown people, strangers, and the employees try to find an employer who is as serious as possible, who pays on time, and respects the deals. By means of these social relationships the migrants try to avoid the authorities and local mafia. These types of arrangements are usually made at departure. If a "home" Gypsy works for a certain employer, he is going to be the connection to other Gypsies who want to work, those who stayed in the village, and the employer. This type of information is only given when there are relations of trust between employer and employee, on one hand, and between employee and the potential migrant, on the other. This information system has as a result an existing network of "home" Gypsies from Atid, thus we can explain the big concentration of Gypsies in the place they prefer as destination in Hungary, Budokalasz. An interesting example of a relationship is of part of a "home" Gypsy family, which, when the work season starts, is transported to the destination by the employer himself, who comes to Atid specially to take them.

From 23 October 2003, the change of the regulations on compulsory visas, as a consequence of the treaty between the Hungarian and the Romanian governments, has generated new forms of adaptation on the part of the migrants. Before 2003 migrants could leave at anytime and stay in Hungary for an unlimited period, on the condition they update their passport each month at the border. Once the new regulations have been introduced, migrants without working permits can only stay in Hungary for 90 days within a period of 6 months, starting from October 23, 2003. Working in Hungary as day labourers in agriculture or construction, "home" Gypsies have started to allocate the time used for migration differently, according to the work available in different seasons. Thus, they try to leave more often during the months of spring or summer. One example comes from a Gypsy from Atid, who intended to allocate a month on spring and two months in the summer, reasoning that "there are plenty of things to do in the summer".

To summarize, at this point it is sufficient to say that the presence or the absence of resources implies different departure strategies to Hungary. "Home" Gypsies, who do not have the material resources to which "Gabor" Gypsies have access, are forced to develop social relationships, between them and especially with Hungarians. The activities carried out by "Gabor" families involve mobility and substantial profits (we are going to discuss this in detail in the next section) and are expressed by

a specific form of migration capital. The reproduction of this capital assures them more independence in social relations, in contrast to “home” Gypsies.

Social networks and economic practices in Hungary

The resources they dispose and the characteristics of the occupations practiced confer on “Gabor” Roma flexibility and liberty in contrast with “home” Gypsies. Trading requires capital, which seasonal work does not, but not at the level of large-scale entrepreneurial activity. Small-scale trading does not involve the investment of substantial economic capital⁷ and the marketable goods can be easily transported, so the entrepreneur is not tied to a single place, as is the case of investments in industry or agriculture. This occupational characteristic has been called “liquidity” (Bonacich, 1973: 585). In order to develop successful commercial activities at the destination, “Gabor” Gypsies use certain ways of organization and must gather, legally speaking, some conditions. They choose “comecon” market-places (Czako, 1997) in Hungary to display their commodities. Since the end of the 1980s, these markets have been an important source of supply of cheap merchandise for the local population, the Hungarians, but they also represent an opportunity for different groups of traders (the Poles were the initiators of the phenomenon). They were conceived as an alternative form of commercial institution, often replacing the ordinary shops, authorized to sell the consumer goods: clothes, make-up accessories, household goods, technical items (ibid). An important characteristic of the people involved in this type of activity is their status as middlemen - they are not manufacturers or craftsmen. Even if they are considered by the press and by the local authorities as being illegal, many of these markets have known a real development after 1990. The ethnic composition of the “comecon” markets is very diverse, the Gypsies being in a range of 8-10% out of the total number of traders in many towns known for their trade activity: Pecs, Budapest, Szeged (ibid). Most of them specialize in selling clothes and shoes. If we discuss the strategies of tinker Roma (“Gabor”) from Atid, we must mention that they buy merchandise (second-hand clothes) to be sold by women on their return to Romania. With an amount of 100 EUR they can buy five bags of second-hand clothes from Hungary, which will be retailed in Atid for a long period of time.

“Gabor” Roma, in contrast to “home” Gypsies, work on the basis of commerce permits. Until 2003 the migrants had the right to leave each month for Hungary or they could stay for long periods by renewals of their visas at the border. Most of the “Gabor” Gypsies leave for Hungary in spring and summer and come back home in winter, to Atid. Notwithstanding the old regulation that allowed an entire month of commerce in Hungary, “Gabor” Roma succeeded in extending the trips to several months, adapting themselves successfully to legal provisions. The new regulation, in force from October 2003, will have the result of reducing activity from eight-nine months to three months in each period of six months.

“Gabor” traders keep the same type of mobility at destination too, maintaining a stable lodging in a certain town and go to a different market each day, which is possible because they own cars. The competition and the increased territorial mobility required by trading activity limit the links between rich Gypsies. Thus they are not seen together very often. The most common social unit of retailing is the

⁷ In an extended meaning which could be used for the present work, “capital” represents a stock of goods and services which is not addressed to immediate consumption, but which is used indirectly in the long term in order to increase the level of consumption. The resources that can be considered as part of the capital are material and non-material ones. The capital can be regarded from three perspectives: as means of production, control and power, and as an investment fund (Firth, 1964: 18).

married couple. This is the most common form of change that has resulted from trade in Hungary – the association between woman and man – and at the same time an important transformation of the different economic roles that partners had before taking up this occupation. It must be remembered that this association is not reflected in local practices in Atid village. In the latter, the gender division by occupational criteria is maintained: women retail second-hand clothes and men work as tinkers all over Romania.

They pay monthly rents for accommodation, which are much higher than those paid by “home” Gypsies. The latter find work in Hungarian villages and usually pay rent on a daily basis (around 200 HUF per night or 5000 HUF per month), while “Gabor” migrants stay in small towns and look for cheap lodgings. A couple of traders pay around 20000 HUF for a house with two rooms. Once they find a good place they stay for a long time, the rental period for some of them is five months. At the same time their earnings are higher than those of “home” Gypsies. In a month they can earn 200000 HUF, while “home” Gypsies can earn, only when they find a seasonal job, at most 90000 (approximately 3000 HUF per day).

Although earnings are quite substantial for traders, they could still be included in the category of “consumption-oriented entrepreneurs” – the same as for “home” Gypsies – taking into consideration the fact that the incomes earned are not systematically reinvested, being used for general consumption. At the same time, the participation of the domestic group and the lack of involvement of other actors, (associates, employees), limits the possibility of developing a business. However, between the two Roma groups there are qualitative differences. Abel Valenzuela (2001) discusses the “disadvantaged (survivalist) entrepreneurs”, a category which brings together those who have as main concern the survival through day labour. This is the case with “home” Gypsies who do not have other options on the labour market. They are obliged to adopt day labour as a survival strategy, in Atid and in Hungary too. Though they can be categorized as “consumption-oriented entrepreneurs”, “Gabor” Gypsies, besides the prospect of substantial incomes, are also attracted by the life style (mobility, flexibility, independence) and the prestige associated with this occupation (qualified as “a clean job”). Moreover amounts of money they use in order to satisfy material necessities and especially symbolic needs, are much larger than the amounts of money spent by “home” Gypsies. “Gabor” also differ from the Hungarian peasants, who breed animals and practice agriculture, and have negative attitudes towards these occupations, which they consider as “dirty”.

“Home” Gypsies work in Hungary for employers who can be peasants who build a house or need a helping hand to cultivate agricultural land. Law number 4/1991 (Hars, Sik & Toth, 2000: 255), which regulates the work of migrants in Hungary, refers to an authorization document which must be obtained by the employer in order to be used by the employee. The latter, after he or she receives the papers needed, together with the work permit, will be able to work legally abroad. The employers do not pay anything for these documents because the costs are very high. They prefer to make an informal arrangement with the local authorities, sometimes sending the Gypsies to work for local policemen or local council bureaucrats. Also, they ensure there is a day labourers network, by establishing trustful relations with the workers.

All these relationships, with the authorities and with day labourers minimize the risks of engaging in such informal activities. Due to the lack of legal papers, “home” Gypsies find the Hungarian employers not only a source of income but also protection, in this way establishing a relationship of dependence on their employer. Those who go abroad without connections have less chance to find an

employer because “in Hungary if the employer does not know you, he does not hire”, as a “home” Gypsy said. In any case the employers do not offer them a place to stay or food for the working day. The only facility they offer to “home” Gypsies is a loan of a certain amount of money for the first days while they look for a place to stay (if they do not find place to stay, they build a temporary house from branches and earth). The informal protection given by the employer is well exemplified by the case of a “home” Gypsy whose documents and money were stolen on his departure. The help offered by the employer consisted of the money needed for transportation and for a special travel permit, which had cost around 15000 HUF.

“Home” Gypsies with no contacts to a network of middlemen between employers and employees, have encountered difficulties as day labourers in Hungary. Gypsies who left without a recommendation to an employer have often been deceived by such “patrons” or they have had to wait for a long time (up to two weeks) to find one.

Throughout their migration “home” Gypsies depend on the relations with their employers and with other members of their community. The resources on which they rely are those of sociability. Theoretically, the success of an economic activity is associated with social resources furnished by social contact, a contact which offers access to power and information (Lin, 1982). The lack of resources other than social ones, creates a certain dependence of “home” Gypsies on employers (they rely on the good faith of the employers to hire them, to pay them according to a deal that can be easily broken and to protect them). In contrast, “Gabor” Roma use material resources, mostly relying on the unity of the domestic group and its independence and flexibility.

The effects of migration: models of consumption, residential mobility and community credibility

What do Roma do when they come back from the trips abroad? First of all the incomes obtained from migration are used mainly for different consumption needs. They use money to buy food for the winter. “Gabor” Gypsies equip their homes and buy cars, which they will use for trips in Romania or to Hungary, or for short trips (even for buying things from the shops in the village, for example). For “Gabor” the consumption is sometimes conspicuous, having as final goal differentiation from other households. For example, when many “Gabor” Roma get in touch after a long period of time, they spend a lot of money in different places only to demonstrate their high standard of living.

The effects of migration do not consist only of economic advantages, especially from the point of view of consumption, but are also found at the level of community relations. For “Gabor” families, migration means adjusting and preserving relationships. Weddings and the funerals are means by which blood relationships and prestige associated with the family name are reconfirmed, and have an important place in social and economic life. The weddings and the funerals involve careful organization, social obligations and large amounts of money on the part of the organizer. These ceremonies involve at the same time other forms of conspicuous consumption. A funeral can cost the relatives of the deceased around 150 millions ROL. In addition, for a wedding, the dowry represents an amount in a convertible currency (between 5 and 10 thousands EUR) that the parents of the girl must offer to the young married couple. Thus, “the target” of a family to maintain their prestige and reputation in these moments of life can be difficult to achieve, given that these great amounts of money, are rarely possessed by rural inhabitants of Romania. That is why the supplementary sources of income will be exploited at maximum level in order to prevent any event that could ruin the respective family by hav-

ing to obtain undesirable but necessary loans.

The same applies to “home” Gypsies who use the incomes earned from migration for winter supplies, ensuring the survival of the family. By repairing and modernizing their houses migrants sometimes succeed in improving their housing conditions.

The money earned in Hungary is often used to buy a house, usually in areas populated by Hungarians. In this case the status of the migrants’ household rises. They can benefit from more credibility in the Hungarian community. Many “home” Gypsies suggested that they started to be regarded differently (as trustworthy people and even with sympathy) by the Hungarians, after they changed their place of residence and started to go to Hungary to work. In this sense migration helps the “home” Gypsies to increase their credibility and visibility in the Hungarian community. These transformations will ease the development of relations and transactions between the two groups. The Gypsies will obtain more easily the loans they need. An interesting example of help and mutual trust comes from a “home” Gypsies’ family for whom a neighbouring Hungarian family pays the bills when the Gypsies are in Hungary.

For both groups, temporary migration for commerce or work constitutes an income source aimed at covering consumption needs, to affirm or to sustain an elevated social status in the community but less for investments.

The most important change that has occurred for “Gabor” Gypsies at social organization level is migration for commerce. As I mentioned in a previous section, it means the realization in common by women and men of their economic roles within the domestic group. The practice of commerce by men represents a form of adaptation to the economic opportunities brought by post-socialism. This adaptive strategy is strictly connected to migration practices. At local level, the division of labour in and out of household is the usual one: the women retail second-hand clothes, while men practice the tinker’s trade.

For “Gabor” families the practices associated with migration do not imply fundamental changes in their life style nor in their social positioning. In contrast, for “home” Gypsies, migration can be a means of upward social mobility.

Conclusions

In the socialist period the experiences for the two Roma groups studied here differed. “Home” Gypsies were located in the framework of the planned economy, most of them working for the state collective farms while, “Gabor” Gypsies were independent small tinkers (men) and traders (women). These two economic and occupational patterns involved different life styles. “Gabor” needed to migrate in order to look for work, while “home” Gypsies were bound to the local community by their work places in agriculture. The situation was similar in post-socialism, as the differences between the two groups have been perpetuated. Those working in the informal economy were better prepared for exploiting new earnings opportunities. “Gabor” families had a rich migration experience in the Western region of Romania, as well as commercial abilities, and managed to be among the first who seasonally migrated to Hungary.

The absence of any forms of capital (money, connections, abilities, which the “Gabor” have more or less) has led, in the case of “home” Gypsies, to new forms of social and economic organization.

"Home" Gypsies moved from their dependence on the structures of the planned economy to dependence on the connections with the local Hungarian population. This form of adaptation, combining several economic activities, was precipitated in the context of social insecurity generated by withdrawal of the state from people's life and by the gradual collapse of the socialist economy. At the micro- and meso-social levels, people have created their own logic in order to face the changes. These practices have an informal content, developing in parallel and independently of institutional life and of the new structures (Burawoy & Verdery, 1999: 1-2).

The practice of an occupation has supposed the involvement, to a smaller or larger extent, of households, networks, kin relations, neighbourhood, or interethnic relations. During post-communism people have resorted more to networks than they did during the communist period (Sik & Wellman, 1999: 225). The most active networks in the informal economy are organized on criteria of kinship, friendship or neighbourhood, in general, persons bound through mutual trust. In this way people create through their economic practices their own social institutions that allow them to carry on a certain activity. While some of them manage to successfully reorient their resources, this being the case of tinker Roma ("Gabor"), the others began creating them after the 1990s ("home" Gypsies). "Gabor" Gypsies are using their commercial abilities as well as their migration experience in Romania in order to carry out commercial activities in Hungary. In contrast, "home" Gypsies, lacking resources, develop their social relations with Hungarian neighbours through day labour. These relationships have helped them migrate temporarily for work. Following this argument we may say that not only the economic imprints the social, the opposite sometimes occurs. The community of "Gabor" Roma is illustrative of cases where the maintaining of the prestige and family name and of community relationships and obligations force them to adopt more lucrative occupations, such as commerce in Hungary. This practice imposes in its turn changes at the level of division of labour.

The migration of the two Roma groups is temporary, because of the particular occupational cycle (in the autumn and in winter commercial or employment opportunities are reduced), and cross border restrictions (especially the most recent that limit the duration of trips to Hungary). Thus migration to Hungary does not represent, for either of the studied groups, a single or permanent solution for material or symbolic consumption needs. Activities associated with migration are complementary to local practices, and are integrated in a yearly domestic work cycle. In other words, "home" Gypsies who seasonally migrate in Hungary do not give up their status of day labourers employed by Hungarians in Atid, nor do "Gabor" Roma who are traders in Hungary give up the tinker's trade they practice locally and regionally in Romania. Both of them stay active within two different spheres of production and consumption.

Even if Roma work in Hungary in large numbers, the impact of migration is mostly found at household level, not at community level, where it at least offers an effective means of earning a living. The welfare that we can notice at "Gabor" households is not entirely a consequence of temporary migration to Hungary. The jobs they do at local or regional level are adequate to meet consumption needs, even though not at the same level. At the same time the strategies developed at the level of community of origin are almost exclusively based on consumption, which put the activities associated with migration of Roma within the conceptual category of "survival entrepreneurship". Consequently, this specific form of temporary migration (short periods of time, informality and situational diversity⁸) has not created

⁸ "It is evident that the informal sector, both in terms of employment but also in terms of a range of other activities (trading, trafficking, and so on) is a very important element in understanding Central Europe as a migration space" (Okolski 2000: 39).

development opportunities, but just an alternative to local models of organization of economic life and a complementary source of income. Thus, temporary migration to countries in Central Europe seems to differ from the migration for long periods to Western Europe in the limited impact on the home communities and the failure to create the preconditions for major economic development.

However, the structural changes in operation from 1 May 2004 can lead to new strategies and adaptive forms for Roma, but also for other populations of Transylvania. On the other hand, there are some restrictions concerning border crossing and working abroad. We will see to what extent the migration flows increase or decrease and in what way they adapt to the new regulations. In what way the strategies of return migration remain at the level of consumption or are reorientated towards investments, towards community transformation, remain a problem for future research.

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